

### What is the magnitude of the problem?

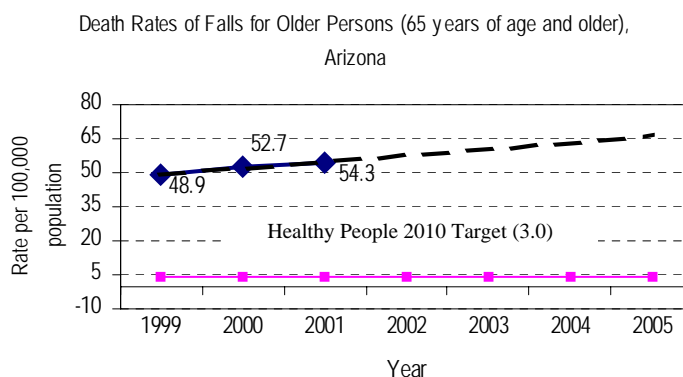
There is a growing concern with the number of injuries related to falls among older adults age 65 and over. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ranked Arizona fifth in the nation for fall deaths in the year 2000. Between 1999 and 2001, the death rate in Arizona from injury related to falls increased from 48.9 per 100,000 to 54.3 per 100,000. Falls are the primary cause of injury-related hospitalizations for older adults in Arizona, when injuries related to medical procedures or adverse events are not included.

### What is the cost?

During 2001 there were 8,595 hospitalizations related to injuries from falls for older adults. The average length of stay was approximately 5 days and an average cost of \$18,511 per hospitalization. The maximum expenditure for all hospitalizations related to falls was approximately \$159 million. Hospitalization data are from state hospitals only; federal facilities (Veterans Affairs and Indian Health Services) are not included.

Of the 8,595 hospitalizations from injury related falls:

- Almost 68% were women.
- Approximately 40% were discharged to a skilled nursing facility.
- Continuing costs after a fall include increased disability, loss of independence, and premature death.
- Maricopa County had the greatest percentage (50.6%) of hospitalizations due to falls followed by Yavapai County (17.1%).



---Linear Projection for 2005

Source: *Arizona Health Status and Vital Statistics, Arizona, 2001*

### Who is at risk?

Risk for injuries related to falls increases significantly with age. Older adults over the age of 85 have the highest number of falls with injuries. Sixty percent of fatal falls occur in the home. Factors that contribute to falls for older adults include problems with walking and balance, physical disabilities, use of medications, dementia, poor vision, and safety hazards in the home. The types of injuries that older adults usually suffer are fractures (breaks in bones) and injuries to the head.

### What will reduce the risk?

Prevention of falls is essential. Reducing the risk of falls will support good quality of life for older adults and help to maintain their independence. The following are suggestions for reducing the risk of falls:

- Start and maintain a regular exercise program to increase or maintain strength, balance, and coordination.
- Assess and make changes to make homes safe.
- Regularly review medications with a healthcare provider and learn the possible effects of certain medications.
- Have yearly eye exams to check for poor vision that may increase the risk of a fall.

To learn about Healthy Aging 2010, please contact Ramona Rusinak at (602) 364-0526 or visit the Healthy Aging 2010 website at <http://www.hs.state.az.us/phs/healthyaging2010>.